

Pest Update (October 7-14, 2009)

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Available on the net at:

<http://www.state.sd.us/doa/Forestry/educational-information/Pest-Alert-Archives.htm>.

Any treatment recommendations, including those identifying specific pesticides, are for the convenience of the reader. Pesticides mentioned in this publication are generally those that are most commonly available to the public in South Dakota and the inclusion of a product shall not be taken as an endorsement or the exclusion a criticism regarding effectiveness. Please read and follow all label instructions and the label is the final authority for a product's use on a particular pest or plant. Products requiring a commercial pesticide license are occasionally mentioned if there are limited options available. These products will be identified as such but it is the reader's responsibility to determine if they can legally apply any product identified in this publication.

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Getting ready for winter

Now is the time to prepare the evergreen landscape for winter, a task often left till too late (just like putting up Christmas lights). Winter preparation should have started in August. Winterburn on evergreens is reduced by providing adequate water in August and September so they do not enter autumn in a stressed state. Fortunately we have had an abundance of rain this fall so going into winter slightly dehydrated is not likely a problem for most evergreen plantings.

Another possible task is spraying evergreens with an anti-transpirant such as wilt-pruf or transfilm but perhaps not now. I have received a couple of calls on this from educators during the last couple of weeks. These products, also known as anti-desiccants, create a waxy coating on the foliage that reduces water loss during warm and windy winter days. While this sounds like a simple procedure, there are a couple of important considerations. First, most of our winter-burn actually occurs in March when the temperatures are above freezing but the soil is still frozen. Studies have shown that there is little value to them during times the air temperature is below freezing. These products really may be best applied in mid-March, rather than now, during a day that the temperatures are above freezing (perhaps soon in the year in the Rapid City-Spearfish areas where above freezing temperatures may occur in mid-winter). Second, anti-transpirants can injury plants if applied improperly or to the wrong plant so be sure to read and follow the labeled instructions carefully. Finally, anti-transpirants do not protect against salt damage; in fact, de-icing salts carried to the foliage will dissolve the anti-transpirant.

E-samples



We are seeing fall color on conifers. Evergreen does not mean “forever green” and at this time of year pines are dropping their third-year needles. These are the interior needles and will often turn a bright yellow before dropping (as in the upper picture), though this year due to the continuously cool, wet condition the color is more a yellowish-red (as in the lower picture). Still this color change and the number of needles falling are resulting in some alarmed tree owners worried about their “dying” tree. Spruces usually drop their fifth to seventh year needles at this time and these often turn a yellow, red or brown before dropping. This year because of the cloudy weather the color change is subdued and not noticed by many.

Samples received

Brown County (extension)
seedling?

Please identify this volunteer

This is common chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*). It frequently is planted by birds.

Clark County (extension)
are the berries safe to eat?

Delores was wondering what it is and

No, this is common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*); a tall shrub or small tree that can be found throughout South Dakota, though it was introduced from Europe more than a century ago as a hedge plant. Buckthorn is easy to spot

right now as it is about the only deciduous tree still in leaf and full of fruit. There is a good reason for all the fruit hanging from it. Do not eat the fruit, even eating a dozen or so ripe berries can result in rather sudden, and violent, diarrhea.

Day County (conservation district)
What is on Angela's tree and what should she do about it?

The clusters of curled leaves are the result of feeding by the ash leaf curl aphid. This insect feeds on the leaves at the tips of ash trees during the summer. This year it was first reported in the June 10 issue of the Update but I received samples during much of the summer. The insects can be control with a spring soil drench of an insecticide containing imidacloprid or spraying the tree with an insecticide containing acephate when the problem is first noticed in early summer. Despite the ugly appearance to the branches, the tree will not die from the infestation.

Haakon/Jackson Counties (extension)
What is this vine growing on all the plants in the yard?

This is dodder (*Cuscuta* spp), also known as Devil's hair. It is often found in alfalfa fields but can also be found growing on and up many herbaceous and woody plants in gardens and yards. The twining yellow to orange vine is almost thread-like and the fruit appears as tiny (1/8-inch) balls. You rarely see much green on the plants as they are parasitic and derive their food from the host plants (typically legumes). The plant is difficult to kill as the seeds can remain dormant for five years or longer. Pulling them out before they produce seeds is one common control but is only practical for small gardens.

Walworth County (extension)
Dutch elm disease.

Dutch elm disease was not detected in either of the two bundles submitted. Usually after Labor Day most community Dutch elm disease surveys finish as wilting and yellowing leaves often become so common on trees by that time that you would be testing every tree you see and these symptoms often are not associated with the pathogen but scales, aphids or some other pest problem. There is the possibility that the trees have the disease but not in the branches submitted for testing.